



Arizona Public Safety Communications Interoperability Conference

Recap

The Public Safety Wireless Network (PSWN) Program and the Arizona Public Safety Communications Committee (AZ PSCC) jointly sponsored the Arizona Public Safety Communications Interoperability Conference on April 30, 2002, in Phoenix, Arizona. More than 240 local, state, federal and tribal public safety officials were brought together to begin a dialog and identify solutions to address the critical need for public safety communications interoperability in the state. During this full day of panel discussions, presentations, and audience questions, participants developed key results-oriented actions to help the State of Arizona begin to pave its way to implementing a statewide public safety radio system.

The day began with a welcome address from the Governor's office. Mr. George Weisz, Governor Jane Dee Hull's Deputy Chief of Staff, Policy Advisor for Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice, stated that the Interoperability Conference was an absolute necessity for making progress on interoperability in Arizona. He pointed out that the one-day conference represented the first time public safety agencies across all levels of government in the State of Arizona came together to discuss the issue of communications interoperability. Further, Mr. Weisz emphasized the need for the State Legislature to make public safety communications interoperability a top priority, despite the state's ongoing budget problems. To achieve that goal, Mr. Weisz stated that the public safety community would need to coordinate, cooperate, and mobilize. According to Mr. Weisz, coordination and cooperation should not be a problem for the state because Arizona public safety agencies came together during the 2001 World Series to secure the grounds of Bank One Ballpark.

The challenging aspect for the public safety community, Mr. Weisz said, would be articulating the issue of interoperability and obtaining the

necessary funding from the legislature. Specifically, mobilizing the public safety community to educate state representatives and the public about the need for seamless communications was key to addressing that challenge. Only members of the public safety community could truly articulate the importance of two-way radio communications during day-to-day or large-scale incidents. As such, Mr. Weisz explained, it was imperative that the same group generate ideas and solutions for addressing public safety communications interoperability in Arizona. During his address, Mr. Weisz provided guidance to conference attendees—

- Develop a long-term strategy to address communications interoperability
- Take advantage of Arizona's unique cooperative spirit
- Use House Concurrent Resolution 2014¹ as a springboard to reach out to state representatives.

The best ideas come from the bottom up.

Mr. George Weisz
Deputy Chief of Staff, Policy Advisor for Law
Enforcement and Criminal Justice
State of Arizona

To help usher the state's efforts to develop a statewide public safety radio system, perspectives from elected and appointed officials, examples of current public safety agency collaboration efforts, viewpoints from Federal agencies, and best practices from other states were presented to conference attendees.

¹ This resolution declares the importance of an effective statewide communications system for state public safety agencies

The State of Interoperability in Arizona—Elected and Appointed Officials’ Perspective

Elected and appointed officials are key players in raising the awareness of the critical need for public safety communications interoperability. This audience is also critical in appropriating funds to begin development of the needed infrastructure to facilitate statewide interoperability. Given these roles, the conference provided an opportunity for elected and appointed officials to exchange their ideas and viewpoints on this issue with public safety officials.

Colonel Dennis A. Garrett, Director, Arizona Department of Public Safety (DPS), delivered the keynote address. Col. Garrett spoke of the need for public safety officials in Arizona to use the lessons of the September 11 attacks to educate the public and the State Legislature on the issue of interoperability. This education campaign, noted Col. Garrett, could lead to obtaining the much needed revenue stream to fund a statewide public safety communications system. In his address, Col. Garrett outlined five key action items for success—

- Participate in AZ PSCC meetings
- Include interoperability in local public policy statements
- Encourage public safety agencies to cooperate
- Identify ways to interface with each other
- Educate key stakeholders about the critical need for public safety communications interoperability.

Other prominent elected and appointed officials gave conference attendees an insider’s perspective on communications interoperability and what they believed needed to be done to move the issue forward. These discussions centered in three topic areas: Coordination and partnerships, funding, and standards and technology. Table 1 provides “first steps” as identified by these officials.

Mr. Terry Stewart, Director, Arizona Department of Corrections, gave examples of why interoperability was crucial to Corrections’ daily and incident control operations. Prisons, explained Mr. Stewart, were annexed by cities in which they were located, and effective communications capabilities with county sheriffs and the Arizona DPS were vital while transporting inmates, during escapes, or in the midst of a major disturbance that required backup.

Arizona State Attorney General Janet Napolitano emphasized the need for the public safety community to have the collective will to talk to the public to build demand and create a political groundswell for the issue. Education, stated Ms. Napolitano, was the critical base on which the foundation would be built.

Table 1
First Steps to Improving Interoperability

Coordination and Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Appoint one state entity to take charge• Develop statewide strategic plan on moving forward• Build and nurture relationships between agencies
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prioritize voice and then data funding needs• Seriously consider cost sharing
Standards and Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Address the digital divide issue with the public safety community to increase understanding of current radio technologies and capabilities

Mr. Bobby Joe Harris, President, Arizona Association of Chiefs of Police, and Mr. Harry Beck, Deputy Fire Chief of Phoenix, spoke about the need for interoperable communications from a first responder’s viewpoint. Specifically, Mr. Harris emphasized the value and the need for communications for first responders. He also echoed Ms. Napolitano’s point on the need to educate the public on the interoperability issue. According to Mr. Harris, there needed to be vested interest throughout the state. Mr. Beck shared an example underscoring the need for viable communications between responding public safety agencies. Dust storms on the

highway between Phoenix and Tucson caused visibility problems that led to massive traffic accidents and some fatalities. Interoperable communications systems must be in place to adequately serve the public in those, and other public safety situations, noted Mr. Beck.

The citizens, our customers, want effective communications.

Mr. Harry Beck
Deputy Fire Chief of Phoenix

Sheriff Hal Collett, Arizona Sheriffs Association, expressed his concerns about coverage issues in Arizona's rural areas and asked conference attendees not to forget rural residents during strategy and planning sessions. Sheriff Collett also stated that the Sheriffs Association voted unanimously to support AZ PSCC's efforts in mobilizing the public safety community to educate the public and state representatives on the need for interoperable communications. Sheriff Collett continued by outlining why interoperable communications in rural communities was vital—

- Search and rescue missions during floods or other natural disasters must be coordinated and must have effective communications capabilities to adequately serve the community.
- Lack of interoperable communications and interagency coordination hindered effective response during a flood that swept an entire rural town away.
- This lapse in wireless communications capabilities resulted in the use of runners to communicate back and forth between responding agencies.

There is no "I" in team; cooperation and coordinated planning will lead to success.

The Honorable Wes Marsh
Arizona House of Representatives

The Honorable Wes Marsh, Arizona House of Representatives, discussed the need for mobile data technology, information sharing, and tearing down barriers. Mobile data, explained Rep. Marsh, was needed in real time to communicate sensitive information to officers. This information sharing ability would enhance the incident response effectiveness of officers. Rep. Marsh also spoke about the need to tear down barriers and coordinate interagency response during large-scale incidents.

Fostering Collaboration Among Local, State, and Tribal Agencies

Some local, state, and tribal public safety agencies in Arizona have already begun to coordinate and develop partnerships with the goal of improving communications interoperability. These agencies include the Arizona Criminal Justice Commission, Arizona DPS, Gila River Fire Department (GRFD), and the cities of Tucson and Mesa.

Mr. Mike Branham, Executive Director, Arizona Criminal Justice Commission, discussed the state's current efforts to achieve interoperability including—

- Receiving a grant in excess of \$1 million to conduct a needs assessment across the state
- Interviewing fire, law enforcement, and emergency medical services personnel to determine user needs
- Researching the feasibility of purchasing an ACU-1000 system as a short-term interoperability solution.

Mr. John Fairchild, Communications Information Systems Coordinator, Flagstaff Police Department, described the importance of partnerships in Flagstaff. He explained how his department took opportunities to build on relationships that were already in place and knocked down the "walls of ownership" that reinforce territorialism. Mr. Fairchild offered some relatively simple ways to coordinate and maintain partnerships with neighboring jurisdictions—

- Gain leverage in the budgeting process by sharing radio and data infrastructure
- Maintain growing partnerships by focusing on the common issues surrounding communications.

Mr. Curt Knight, Telecommunications Manager, Arizona DPS, spoke about the role of the AZ PSCC and its importance in moving forward in developing a statewide system. The AZ PSCC was created by the Arizona DPS to address the issue of interoperability. Specifically, the committee is tasked with establishing a tactical deployment plan for the Integrated Interoperable Public Safety Communications Network at the state and local level throughout the state. Mr. Knight also emphasized the importance of formal agreements or a memorandum of understanding (MOU) in coordinating emergency response or forming lasting partnerships. In his role as Arizona DPS' government relations representative, Mr. Knight shared DPS/AZ PSCC regulatory and legislative updates relating to interoperability with conference attendees. Table 2 highlights these activities.

Table 2
Arizona DPS/PSCC Actions

House Concurrent Resolution 2014
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seeks to generate support for AZ PSCC activities in developing a statewide system • Passed the state House of Representatives and is awaiting action from state Senate
Spectrum Activity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Created a 700 megahertz (MHz) Regional Planning Committee (RPC) • Applied for a statewide license to administer 700 MHz public safety frequency allocation
Outreach and Education Strategy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implemented statewide strategy to inform key stakeholders on the need for interoperable public safety communications • Distributed policy statements to key public safety associations to demonstrate solidarity on the issue

Chief Mark Openshaw, Assistant Fire Chief, GRFD, discussed the collaboration between local and tribal public safety entities to enhance interoperability. Specifically, Chief Openshaw explained that the GRFD and the Gila River

Police Department had a MOU to share frequencies. He said the MOU had improved communications capabilities between the agencies. Further, Chief Openshaw told the participants that the GRFD planned to acquire an 800 MHz conventional digital land mobile radio (LMR) system that would eventually link to the Gila River Department of Corrections and to the joint Phoenix-Mesa 800 MHz trunked digital LMR systems.

This is an issue that needs to be handled by political voices.

Mr. Todd Sander
Chief Information Officer, City of Tucson

Mr. Todd Sander, Chief Information Officer, City of Tucson, spoke about the need to communicate to city managers, mayors, and other government officials at the local level on the critical need for interoperable public safety communications. These key players, explained Mr. Sander, needed to be the champions that took the interoperability issue to state representatives. This, Mr. Sander contends, would eliminate the appearance of having a vested interest. Mr. Sander also spoke of the need to devise a strategy to compete successfully for funding with other current legislative priorities.

Mr. Don Pfohl, Communications Director, City of Mesa, provided conference attendees with an update of the Phoenix-Mesa Project and offered suggestions on ways to successfully create partnerships—

- Speak candidly about threats and develop ways to mitigate them
- Educate key officials and the public and provide concrete solutions for addressing the issue

- Use city council or local boards to obtain political backing
- Be creative and implement easy solutions first
- Understand that concessions must be made on all sides.

Partnerships with federal agencies (i.e., Drug Enforcement Agency, U.S. Customs Service, and Federal Bureau of Investigation) have developed as a result of the Phoenix–Mesa Project, explained Mr. Pfohl.

Federal View Points On Interoperability

Because federal agencies have a significant presence in Arizona, it was imperative that conference attendees understand what steps federal agencies are taking to improve communications interoperability. Key federal agency highlights are provided in Table 3.

Mr. Byron Carr, Telecommunications Specialist, Office of Law Enforcement Services, Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), discussed the narrowband mandate, stating that the BIA was beginning to address the issue and needed to do more in terms of public safety communications interoperability. Mr. Carr also expressed the need for greater communication between local, state, and federal agencies.

Mr. Kyle Sinclair, PSWN Program Deputy Program Manager, Department of the Treasury, introduced conference attendees to the Public SAFETY Interoperable COMmunications Program (Project SAFECOM). He explained that Project SAFECOM was in the process of identifying areas that needed assistance in implementing interoperable networks that would eventually lead to federal-to-state/local communications linkages.

Mr. Terry Hayton, Assistant Director, Wireless Management Office, Department of Justice (DOJ), focused his remarks on joint Department of the Treasury-DOJ partnerships. Specifically, Mr. Hayton discussed the Integrated Treasury Network (ITN)–Justice Wireless Network

(JWN) collaboration to support the 2002 Winter Olympics. Additionally, he stated that the ITN–JWN partnership might extend into the Phoenix–Mesa Project. Mr. Hayton added that DOJ was also actively addressing the narrowband mandate because the deadline was approaching fast.

Table 3
Key Federal Agency Highlights

Federal to State/Local Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordination between federal, state or local agencies can work • All levels of government benefit from information sharing
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing of resources, if possible, is key to success
Spectrum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National efforts to form a database of public safety frequency allotments may result in obtaining one continuous public safety band of spectrum
Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Federal agencies face basic security constraints when trying to coordinate with state or local agencies

The Department of the Interior was represented by Mr. Noel Newberg, National Telecommunications Manager, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Mr. Newberg spoke about the value of sharing microwave resources. This sharing, according to Mr. Newberg, alleviated a substantial amount of budget constraints that would otherwise hinder technological advancements or upgrades. Other Fish and Wildlife interoperability activities included sharing tower sites with other agencies. Mr. Newberg also noted that of the 500 mobile and portable radios in the Fish and Wildlife inventory, 200 had been upgraded to be Project 25 compliant. The remaining 300 would be upgraded shortly.

Mr. Tom Tolman, Director, National Public Safety Telecommunications Council (NPSTC), discussed the efforts of the council to develop a common frequency database for public safety that would allow frequency pre-allotments, development of state or regional plans, and submission and amendment of applications for frequency use. This database, according to Mr. Tolman, would help the public safety

community move forward toward obtaining one continuous band of spectrum that would greatly facilitate interoperability.

Leading by Example—Successful Models

Conference attendees also heard success stories from the Utah Communications Agency Network (UCAN) during the 2002 Winter Olympics and the Michigan Public Safety Communications System (MPSCS). A presentation on the state of public safety communications during the attack on the World Trade Center was also provided. These three examples are modeling the way for states like Arizona by providing lessons learned and best practices. Table 4 highlights best practices for developing a statewide system.

UCAN System and the 2002 Winter Olympics

Mr. Steve Proctor, Executive Director, UCAN, presented the communications lessons learned from the 2002 Winter Olympics. During his presentation, Mr. Proctor outlined the political and funding obstacles the state encountered during the planning phase of the system. Political issues that arose included turf issues, conflicting visions, differing implementation schedules, and communicating with agencies that did not participate in the UCAN system. Funding was also a challenge; however, the awarding of the Olympics to the state boosted public safety communications revenue. Ultimately, UCAN was funded through bonds and federal grants. Once the system was in place, however, there were few public safety communications glitches and the Olympic athletes, participants, and attendees were safer as a direct result.

Michigan's Public Safety Communications System

Captain Tom Miller, Director, Communications Division, Michigan State Police, discussed the roadblocks and successes in planning and developing the MPSCS. He also provided a step-by-step guide on how Michigan planned,

evaluated bids for, and implemented its statewide system.

The MPSCS is a statewide 800 MHz trunked digital radio network that will cover 97 percent of Michigan's population. The complete build-out of the system will be done in four phases.

Table 4
Best Practices for Developing a Statewide System

- Educate local and state officials about interoperability
- Find the person(s) with the power and credibility to make things happen – "Champion of the Project"
- Get special interest groups on board
- Develop a solid contract
- Manage user expectations
- Provide ongoing training
- Adhere to outlined schedule
- Communicate inside and outside Project Team

To date, three phases have been completed and it is expected that the final phase will be done by the end of 2002. Users on the MPSCS will include local, state, and federal public safety agencies.

Mr. Stuart Goldstein of the New York Police Department (NYPD) discussed the Agency Liaison Emergency Radio Trunk (ALERT), a channel for which all emergency responders could switch using an 800 MHz trunked system. This mutual aid channel provided critical interagency communications during the attack on the World Trade Center. Mr. Goldstein stated that all public safety agencies that needed to communicate could do so on the ALERT channel. Additionally, Mr. Goldstein pointed out that the 800 MHz radio International Talk Around Channels (ITAC) were a "quick fix" to achieve interoperability.

Sending officers onto the street without adequate radio and computer support is like years ago when officers went out without a gun. Radios are basic tools officers need to do the job we ask them to do.

Ms. Janet Napolitano
State of Arizona Attorney General

Strategies to Improve Arizona's Interoperable Communications

The Arizona Public Safety Communications Interoperability Conference highlighted current local, state, federal, and tribal efforts to improve interoperability. Conference participants also outlined key actions the public safety community needed to take to ensure key stakeholders understand the importance of interoperability. Together, these “keys to success” form a coherent strategy to improve Arizona's interoperable communications.

• Coordination and Partnership Strategies

- ☐ Build on existing relationships and knock down the “walls of ownership”
- ☐ Use MOUs to improve communications capabilities between agencies
- ☐ Actively participate in the AZ PSCC
- ☐ Collectively educate elected and appointed officials at the local level to become champions of interoperability at the state level

• Funding Strategies

- ☐ Conduct a needs assessment across the state
- ☐ Prioritize voice and then data funding needs
- ☐ Use House Concurrent Resolution 2014 as a stepping stone to obtain additional funding for a statewide system
- ☐ Gain leverage in the budgeting process by sharing radio and data infrastructure

• Spectrum Strategies

- ☐ Fully implement the new 700 MHz spectrum that is available to the state
- ☐ Continue to remind lawmakers that additional public safety spectrum is still needed for interoperability

• Standards Strategies

- ☐ Challenge various vendors to meet the needs of public safety
- ☐ Ensure that any new system supports future capabilities and new technologies

Next Steps—Arizona Moving Forward...

Education, education, education was the resounding theme of the Arizona Public Safety Communications Interoperability Conference. Conference attendees understood by day's end that the word needed to get out on why public safety interoperability was important not only to those who serve the public, but all citizens of Arizona.

Lieutenant Colonel David Felix, Arizona DPS, charged conference attendees to actively participate in the AZ PSCC's effort to assemble the citizens and "create the demand" for public safety communications funding.

This conference provided opportunities for public safety agencies across all levels of government in the State of Arizona to communicate their own needs, understand those of other participants, and begin to build relationships that make coordinating easier.

It is critical that conference attendees take advantage of the collaboration opportunities presented during the conference. Additionally, the attendees are encouraged to use AZ PSCC's education and outreach strategy, and employ tactics like the use of consensus statements, to gain increased support for the statewide system.

As a team, the public safety community can find its "champion" in the State Legislature and eventually obtain the necessary funding that will truly provide new public safety communications beginnings in Arizona.

The AZ PSCC has made great strides in ensuring public safety communications interoperability is understood and accepted as the norm. A lot more can be done, however, to take the strategy to the next level. The public safety community should support and participate in the AZ PSCC. The committee meets the fourth Tuesday of every month. For more information about the AZ PSCC, please contact Lieutenant Colonel David Felix, Arizona DPS, at (602) 223-2371.

Conference attendees can also obtain additional information about interoperability and nationwide efforts to implement solutions that address public safety radio communications interoperability through the PSWN Program at www.pswn.gov.

About The PSWN Program

The PSWN Program is a jointly sponsored initiative of the United States Department of Justice and the United States Department of the Treasury. The PSWN Program is responsible for planning and fostering interoperability among public safety wireless networks so that local, state, federal, and tribal personnel can better communicate with each other while serving the Nation's public safety needs. Through a variety of activities, the program strives to achieve the vision it shares with the public safety community—seamless, coordinated, and integrated public safety communications for the safe, effective, and efficient protection of life and property. A critical feature of the PSWN Program's strategy for supporting widespread interoperability is an emphasis on a leadership role for the individual states to serve as the linchpins for achieving nationwide wireless interoperability.

The PSWN Program has actively supported both states and local entities in improving public safety wireless interoperability. A few examples include:

- Hosting regional symposiums in over 16 different states that bring together local, state, federal, and tribal public safety agencies to share information on wide-ranging issues such as regional planning, funding, and systems planning
- Developing pilot projects in locations nationwide to demonstrate and test interoperability solutions in actual operational settings
- Convening the PSWN Executive Committee, which comprises prominent local and state public safety officials, to provide strategic guidance and promote the need for improved communications interoperability
- Developing a national strategy for public safety interoperability that provides proven, high-level implementation guidelines, best practices, innovative designs, and operating procedures to help the public safety community improve and implement interoperable communications networks.